

Acupressure for Natural Pain Relief in Labour

Debra Betts and Tom Kennedy

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DVD, Running time: 34 mins

DVD price: £11.99
or buy as download from JCM website

This DVD is well presented and packaged. It is chiefly aimed at the general public, being too basic for acupuncturists for whom I would recommend Debra Betts book *The Essential Guide to Acupuncture in Pregnancy and Childbirth*. It encourages the birthing partner, often the father, to be a participant during pregnancy and labour. I believe this is very important in allowing the birthing partner to become more involved in the process and develop a closer bond with the mother prior to birth.

The material in the DVD is based on Debra Betts' understanding of acupuncture during pregnancy and childbirth. She and Tom Kennedy provide the commentary. It starts with a series of patient testimonials stating how they, both men and woman, have found the techniques useful during pregnancy and childbirth.

The first half of the DVD explains the location of acupuncture points that Debra Betts believes are useful during pregnancy and childbirth. I was impressed by how easily they have managed to make point location for lay people. However, as we all know, the location of points varies from person to person and point location texts or DVDs are just a guideline. The location of points is better explained than on other video sources, such as those available on YouTube.

The second half of the DVD explains the use of acupuncture points in pregnancy and labour. Major ailments both during pregnancy and

in labour are covered in each chapter, including pain relief, breech presentation, re-starting labour and encouraging contractions, calming the woman, nausea, post partum pain, breast feeding and postnatal recovery. This covers a broader range of problems women can experience during pregnancy and child birth and is much more complete than videos available on YouTube.

The definition of acupressure in the DVD is given as being 'firm pressure', but in clinical practice this can be ambiguous. Fathers often apply either too much pressure or too little. I believe that the woman will only really know what the correct pressure should be if she has been shown beforehand by a qualified acupuncturist. This also applies to point location. The general public are often unaware how it should feel when an acupoint has been correctly stimulated.

The DVD goes on to explain the use of moxibustion for a breech presentation. I was a little concerned in this section for several reasons: the technique shown had the woman's feet on a pillow or cushion with the feet lying flat. It might look visually appealing, but applying moxibustion to BI 67 *zhi yin* in this position carries a risk of burning the pillow/cushion underneath. It would be safer for the woman's feet to be tilted back onto the heels, moving the little toe away from the material underneath. In addition, no mention is given to the type of moxa that should be used. In the DVD smokeless moxa sticks are used. If members of the public, unaware of the difference, buy a non-smokeless version, then the smoke can set off fire alarms and affect a heavily pregnant woman's already reduced breathing.

I think this DVD is a useful product for many couples expecting a new baby. It also opens up acupuncture to a wider audience and is good value at £11.99. It can be recommended to patients once they have been shown the correct pressure and point location by a qualified acupuncturist.

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